[Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal]
general election has unshered in a phase hitherto unknown in our Parliamentary history. A party with a little more than 25 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha has taken over the reins of the Government. The election results with no party attaining an absolute majority posed a sort of conundrum. There was a big question-mark on the faces of political analysts and legal experts. The right and the most popular answer however, was provided by Shri Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress (I)'s emergence as the single largest party notwithstanding, he chose to sit in the Opposition and offered constructive cooperation to the Government, scotching all rumours which were set afloat by different people with different intentions and idiosyncrasies. This fact, as also the fact that the new Government is in office with the support of two parties professing diametrically opposite and mutually incompatible ideologies has not found mention in the Presidents Address, which otherwise promises to the countrymen a sort of unique model Government. Incidentally, the assertion in the President's Address about the Government's decision to give an alternative model of Government raises some doubts in the minds of the people. It leaves us at sea as to what is up in the mind of the government; whether they wish to bring about a change in the basic structure of the Constitution, distinct from the Parliamentary democracy that we have today.

Sir, it is the prerogative of any Government to set its priorities and formulate policies for running the affairs of the Government.

6.00 P.M.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY): Mr. Bansal, you can continue your speech tomorrow. Now, Shri Arif Mohd. Khan will make a statement.

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STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Accident involving Pawan Hans Helicopter near Patna

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN): Sir, a Dauphin helicopter VT-ELO belonging to Pawan Hans Ltd., while operating ONGC chartered flight from Calcutta to Patna on 15-12-1989 crashed into the river Ganga about six miles from Patna airport. All seven occupants on board are feared dead. The helicopter took off from Calcutta at 16.24 hrs. (IST) and was scheduled to arrive at Patna at 18.40 hrs. The last contact of the helicopter with Patna control was at 18.28 hrs. Both pilots were very experienced and were holding current commercial helicopter pilot licence. Both were also Instrument Rated and night qualified. The Commander Capt. Ahluwalia had 5892 hours of total flying experience and 2168 hours experience on Dauphin helicopter. Major R. K. Baruah had 3244 hours of total flying experience and 1241 hours experience on Dauphin helicopter.

A report was received by Air Traffic Control Patna that an aircraft had crashed into the river Ganga about 10 miles from the airport. Airport officials immediately rushed to the site and a police guard was immediately posted. Salvage operation was organised thereafter. Next morning a team of Naval divers commenced salvage operation. Air Force helicopter and ONGC facilities were also pressed into service immediately to rescue the survivors and recover the wreckage of the helicopter. DGCA, Managing Director, Pawan Hans Ltd. and ONGC officials also reached the spot on the morning of 16th December, 1989 to coordinate the operations.

The depth of the water at the site was 20 feet. Further, local authorities, Navy, Air Force, Indian Inland

Waterways Authority and Godawari Shipyard also participated in the search and rescue operation. Most of the wreckage of the helicopter has been recoverd and has been brought to Patna airport for detailed examination. The bodies of five of the occupants had been recovered by 20th forenoon. The wreckage of the helicopter is being examined by officers of DGCA, Government of Bihar and Pawan Hans Ltd. Preliminary examination of the wreckage indicates the following:—

(i) There was no fire on board prior to accident.

(ii) The tail portion of the helicopter was fairly intact with the tail rotor free to rotate.

(iii) The damage to the helicopter indicated a relatively low speed impact with water.

(iv) The altimeters of the pilot and co-pilot were not found set properly.

(v) The pilot had not attempted an emergency landing.

Pawan Hans Ltd., has announced a compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs to the next of kin of both pilots and others. A sum of Rs. 1 lakh has already been paid in each case.

Immediately after the accident the DGCA has appointed an Inspector of Accident to investigate the cause of the accident.

Government has also decided to constitute a Committee of Inquiry to investigate the cause of the accident.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री बी० सत्यनारायण रेड्डी): अब क्लैरिफ़िकेशस पूछे जाएगे। मेंबरों से अनुरोध है कि वे संक्षेप में अपने सवाल पूछ। श्री वीरभद्र प्रताप सिंह।

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH (Uttar Pradesh): The statement is somewhat surprising to me. The Minister should have covered in his statement what the former Prime Minister and almost all Civil Aviation experts in the country have said about the helicopter. They have stated that it is not suitable to Indian conditions, yet it was acquired.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA (Bihar): Who acquired?

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH: This is not the question, whether we acquired it or you acquired it. But go into the question. After all, the entire ONGC operations are going to be at a standstill. I am pointing out something very important. Even if we have acquired these helicopters, hold the inquiry. (*Interruptions*)...What I was speaking is that including our former Prime Minister, it was held that the Westland-30 helicopter is a killer helicopter and no one in the world including the British Government has bought it so far. Now, the question is eighteen people have died so far in five accidents. This was first acquired as a gift from Britain. But what I have come to know is that we have paid a much higher price for it, nearly Rs. 240 crores including the cost of the spare parts. The actual price paid was much more than what we should have paid.

The second point was that the whole fleet of these helicopters was acquired by the ONGC on three-times more payment. Any other company could have provided it to the ONGC with one-third of the amount that was paid actually. Now, my worry is this, Mr. Minister, which you have not covered because the incident occurred while it was operating for the ONGC. The whole operation of the ONGC in the sea where they land has come to a standstill. All the twenty helicopters you have grounded and you have not mentioned this fact in your statement. Actually, you should have said it. The only public sector undertaking which has contributed so much to our public exchequer last year and which is making

[Shri Bir Bhadra Pratap Singh]
tremendous profits and bringing money to our own country is the ONGC. The question is, how will you tackle the problem of the ONGC operations when you have grounded all the twenty helicopters and why have you not mentioned this fact?

Thirdly, if the profits of the ONGC go then I think, the public sector undertakings are bound to suffer a great deal because last time, we have diverted much of our profits to other things. So, that was a basic question which should have been looked into.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY): Shri Vishwa Bandhu Gupta, absent. Shri A. G. Kulkarni, absent Shri V. M. Jadhav.

SHRI VITHALRAO MADHAVRAO JADHAV (Maharashtra): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, first of all, I congratulate the hon. Minister, who is quite competent in the Civil Aviation Ministry. If you remember, we had a very bad experience before also about the air services in the country which used to be delayed indefinitely and I hope that the Minister will look into that aspect and take necessary steps to ensure that the air services are made regular and the passengers are not made to suffer.

Coming to the point, Sir. in the statement of the Minister, it has been stated and I quote:

> "Both the pilots were very experienced and were holding current commercial helicopter pilot licence. Both were also Instrument Rated and night qualified. The Commander Captain Ahluwalia had 5892 hours of total flying experience and 2168 hours experience on Dauphin helicopter. Major R. K. Baruah hud 3244 hours of total flying experience and 1241 hours experience on Dauphin helicopter."

Sir, the pilots were very experienced because they had the flying exprience in helicopters and their total flying experience was also quite good. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to with whom the fault lies I do not find any fault with the pilots. Either their helicopters are not in good condition or they are not maintained properly. What is the exact position? The other important thing is, is there any relevance of this incident with the helicopter crash at Vaishno Devi in Jammu? Some Westland helicopter crashed there. Criticisms have appeared in newspapers that Westland helicopters are not good. Are they not good technically or is there any problem about maintenance? What is the difficulty actually? Are these helicopters checked before they make a flight? What is the method of checking before flight? As far as planes are concerned, when the pilot goes into the aircraft, there must have been a thorough check. Unless the ground engineer gives the fitness certificate, the flight cannot take off. What is the procedure in respect of helicopters?

Then, how many helicopters which are in operation are old and need to be replaced? What is the total strength of helicopters in Pawan Hans Corporation?

I would also like to ask the hon. Minister whether the strike of engineers had any effect on the operation of helicopters. There was a strike of engineers in Indian Airlines. A lot of inconvenience was caused owing to that. Was there a strike of engineers of helicopters also? If owing to that the engineers did not take care of the helicopter, that might have been the reason for the crash too.

Also, there are a lot of complaints from air staff that there is large variation in salaries compared to other international airlines. Comparatively, our airlines staff are paid low salaries which leads to frustration. What is the position in respect of helicopter staff?

It is learnt that the Government of India is going to launch a new airlines company with some four 737 Boeings, two Fokkers and other aircraft. What is the maintenance arrangement in respect of the different airlines? Unless maintenance is properly done, airlines cannot run smoothly. There are two things to be borne in mind. One is, flights should be on time. The other is, aircraft should be maintained properly. Only if these two are observed, passengers can travel without any inconvenience and safely.

With these few lines, I request the hon. Minister to clarify the points raised by me. Thank you.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI (Andhra Pradesh): Are these helicopters supposed to fly during nights or not? The hon. Minister has said that the helicopter was supposed to land at 18.40 hours. There were several staff on board the helicopter. Who were they? Were they engineers of the ONGC? What was their income?

Then, as Mr. Jadhav asked, was there any difficulty in maintenance? Was this helicopter air-worthy? Is there any proposal from the Government of India to take up the issue with the company that supplied the VT ELO helicopter? Is there any guarantee or warranty time for the helicopters to operate? Were there any kickbacks while purchasing these helicopters just like the Westland helicopters?

A Committee is supposed to be appointed to investigate into the cause of the accident. Who are the members of the Committee? I would like to know these things from the hon. Minister.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, there were two serious helicopter accidents recently, one near the Bombay High and the other in July last in the Vaishno Devi area. Newspaper reports say that when this Patna accident took place, 18 helicopters were grounded and some inquiry into the snags that had probably led to this accident was undertaken. First I would like to know whether the helicopters which were grounded since 1986 have been put into operation. And all the time there have been demands on the floor of the House, in both the Houses of Parliament, that they should be grounded pending a fuller and systematic examination of the whole system, not only of this accident, but of the entire system. Will the Government undertake this so that there are no accidents in future? The statement that has been made itself says that there was no explosion or there was no fire in it. But it appears that there were some technical problems or some mechanical problems. For example, the altimeters were not set properly. The pilots were very experienced. Yet this kind of things happened. One line in the statement says that no emrgency landing took place. But according to newspaper reports which I have, Capt. Ahluwalia who was the Captain of the aircraft, contacted the Tower and informed them that he was landing. I have a copy of *The Statesman*. I can show it to the Minister. But the statement made here shows that there was no information abouting the landing. Then there was a press report that there was an young engineer belonging to ONGC who first found the information, who got the news about this. His father was a police officer. They swung into action and later on other people came. When there was silence from the helicopter after the Captain contacted the main Tower, why did not the Tower immediately send messages to Pawan Hans? My complaint is, and newspaper reports also mention disturbing things, about the rescue operations. For several hours, *The Statesman* says, the bodies were not taken delivery of by the Pawan Hans people or the airports authority though they were contacted a number of times by these people. Even the police was absent. Will the Government look into this? Will the honourable Minister tell the House what exactly was

[Shri Kapil Verma]

the position and why his happened. Why should not action be taken against those people? For several hours the bodies were not taken care of. I would also like to know what measures the Government will take to set a procedure and to ensure that in future such laxity in rescue operations does not occur. I would also like to know about the post-martem reports, whether the Government has got them. As I said, the entire ssytem — the fleet of helicopters which we have, etc. is all old history — should be reviewed and the honourable Minister should tell the House what steps he is taking to ensure that the helicopters which we have are not flown unless they are found technically very sound, unless the machines are properly checked. I am told that the machines are not properly checked. So I hope the Government, the young Minister who has taken over, will look into all these aspects and take all precautions so that valuable lives are not lost in future.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री बी० सत्यनारायण रेड्डी): डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय। संक्षेप में करिये।

डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय (उत्तर प्रदेश): माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, हेलीकाप्टर दुर्घटना में यह पांचवीं दुर्घटना है। सबसे पहले वैष्णो देवी में दुर्घटना हुई। नागालैंड में जिस हैलीकाप्टर में 5-6 बार यात्रा करने का मुझे मौका मिला था, उसकी भी दुर्घटना हुई। अब तक कुल पांच हेलीकाप्टर दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो चुके हैं। जो पटना में 15 दिसम्बर को दुर्घटना हुई है यह भी इसकी कड़ी में है। इसके कैप्टन अहलूवालिया और बरुआ पूर्ण प्रशिक्षित और अनुभवी पायलेट थे। उसके बाद भी यह दुर्घटना हुई। माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने इसके जो कारण दिये हैं, अब तक की जांच के उसमें केवल दो कारण ऐसे हैं, एक तो हेलीकाप्टर की क्षति से पता चलता है कि जल के साथ टकराते समय उसकी गति अपेक्षाकृत धीमी थी। दूसरा विमान चालक और सह-विमानचालक के आल्टीमीटर्स सही ढंग से लगे हुए नहीं पाये गए और आगे है कि विमान चालक ने आपात अवतरण का प्रयास नहीं किया। ऐसी दुर्घटनाएं हेलीकाप्टर्स की आए दिन होती रहती है। मैं मन्त्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि कितने हेलीकाप्टर्स भारत सरकार की सेवा में हैं और उनमें कितने अब तक दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हुए हैं और कितने और दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होने की स्थिति में हैं और उनकी क्या व्यवस्था की जा रही है (**व्यवधान**)

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री बी० सत्यनारायण रेड्डी): आप दुर्घटना चाहोगे क्या (**व्यवधान**)

डा० रत्नाकर पाण्डेय: आप उपसभाध्यक्ष की तरह सुनें तो ज्यादा अच्छा रहेगा। जैसे कि कहा गया है कि यह हेलीकाप्टर्स गिफ्ट में मिले थे। बहुत से गिफ्ट में मिले हैं और बहुत से खरीद कर के आए हैं परन्तु लगातार दुर्घटनाएं हो रही हैं। शासन कोई हो लेकिन दुर्घटना दुर्घटना है। इन पांचों दुर्घटनाओं में प्रशिक्षित पायलट मारे गये हैं, कितने कर्मचारी मारे गये हैं। जिन्दगी का कोई मोल नहीं हो सकता लेकिन सरकार ने उनको पांच-पांच लाख रुपये दिये हैं इनको भी दिया है और क्या व्यवस्था उनकी की है तथा भविष्य में ऐसी दुर्घटनाएं न हों इसके लिए क्या प्रिकाशन लिया जा रहा है। जहां तक मुझे मालूम है ओ०एन०जी०सी० में जो हेलीकाप्टर चलते हैं उनको पायलट करने के लिए कोई व्यवस्था अभी तक नहीं हुई है जिसके परिणामस्वरूप हमारे ओ० एन० जी० सी० के कर्मचारी जो बम्बई के हैं अभी तक रिग्ज पर नहीं पहुंचे हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में उनकी रिग्ज तक उड़ान के लिए क्या व्यवस्था की जा रही है? यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं। आज हम हर चीज पर चांज बैठा देते हैं सरकार के लिए भी चांज बैठा रही है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि यह कब तक बैठाएंगे और उस जांच की रिपोर्ट समयबद्ध आए और उसमें कितना समय लगेगा? यह स्पष्टीकरण मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं।

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN (West Bengal): Sir, during the last fifteen months we have been witnessing a spate of air disasters in the country. Whether it is the Dauphin helicopter or the Westland helicopter or the Dornier aircraft or the Boeing aircraft or other types of aircraft, a series of air accidents have been taking place during the last fifteen months.

What I feel is that apart from the shady deals which were entered into for acquiring these aircraft into our airline system, the safety aspect of the aircraft was thoroughly neglected and this criminal neglect of the safety aspect of the aircraft has resulted in this disastrous situation wherein we find a number of accidents taking place in our country.

The Dauphin crash into the Ganga a few days back was there and a few days earlier another helicopter crashed near Bombay shore. Fortunately, there was no death. We also remember that a few months back a Westland helicopter crashed in Vaishnodevi and another Westland helicopter also crashed near Kohima. In this way, you will find that a number of helicopters have crashed during this period. It is not only the helicopters which have crashed, but it is also the aircraft like the Dornier aircraft. Only a few days back a Dornier aircraft crashed near Pune, belonging to Vayudoot, resulting in many deaths. The Dornier aircraft is prone to accidents. Not only that. Even our Boeing aircraft have crashed. A Boeing crashed in Ahmedabad and another at Gauhati. The point is that while during the last few months so many accidents have taken place in our country, we do not know the reason. I would like to know whether the new Government will look into this matter and find out why this system is failing in our country.

In this connection, I want to put some questions. What is the state of maintenance of these aircraft? It is reported that neither the Indian Airlines nor the Vayudoot nor the Pawan Hans has any proper system of maintenance and the maintenance aspect is thoroughly neglected. Also is there any laxity in the matter of maintenance on the part of the DGCA?

Another intriguing aspect is there. There is a report that the Pawan Hans Chairman and the Commissioner for Air Safety are one and the same person. I would like to know whether this is correct.

Then, Sir, there is a demand from so many quarters in the country that these dangerous aircraft and helicopters like the Westland helicopter, the Dauphin helicopter and the Dornier aircraft should be immediately grounded instead of making more experiments resulting in more deaths. There is a strong demand that these aircraft should be immediately grounded and then the Government should inquire into the cause of the accident. I would like to know whether the Government is agreeable to the grounding of these Dornier aircraft or the Dauphin and Westland helicopters. Lastly, I suspect that there were shady deals in acquiring all these aircraft for our air system. These deals were connected with kickbacks. I would like to know whether this new Government would make a thorough inquiry into all these deals through which these Dornier aircraft and Dauphin and Westland helicopters were inducted into our airline system. I would like to know whether the Government is agreeable to that. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, it seems that our young Minister has taken over quite efficiently without relying totally on the draft supplied by the members of the bureaucracy. I do not mind bureaucracy drafting the statements. But this Statement appears to be a little difference in the sense that it gives out quite vividly as regards what had happened and what actually

[Shri Gurudas Das Gupta]

the Government has been able to find out. In that sense the Statement is quie comprehensive. While complimenting the person or persons who haved drafted the Statement and complimenting the Minister for his stewardship, I believe that before the last elections which have resulted in the crash of the Government, there have been a number of air crash. After the crash in the last elections, the new Minister has taken over. Therefore, it is quite urgent and important for the Government to ensure that no such crash takes place either so far as the helicopters are concerned...

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA (Delhi): Are you talking about South or North?

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: To me the country is an undivided whole.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): Your party crashed in Kerala. Have you forgotten that?

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, will the House of Elders bid farewell and good bye to the normal procedure and decorum that has been a long cherished practice of this august House. (*Interruptions*) I am speaking of crash. What there no crash? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: In Kerala your party crashed.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, the point is that the air security and air safety have been matters of casualty. There has always been a sort of casualty for the last several years. Somebody has to be blamed for it. Of course, the people who have led the nation and the Department have to be blamed. It is a plain truth. Therefore, firstly I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is going to take air safety as casually as it had been taken previously by his predecessors. This is very important not only for the lives of the ONGC officials but it also involves the goods name and goodwill of this country. Therefore, I would like to know whether he is going to take the question of air safety as casually as before and whether he is going to take it a little more seriously and see whether he can do something very concretely in this regard. Secondly, I don't understand actuallly and the Minister has also not clarified it. Why had that helicopter to fly at odd hours? It was flying in darkness. Was the flying of that helicopter in darkness from Calcutta to Patna necessary so far as the job allotted to it was concerned? Was it doing some work on the way or was it involved in a routine job? Why was the helicopter flying in darkness? The pilots may be quite efficient. That is true. But was it necessary to fly the helicopter in the darkness from Calcutta to Patna? The distance was not quite short. Then, why was it necessary? Thirdly, Sir, what is the mechanism to ensure the airworthiness of the helicopters? What is the mechanism? Because on the mechanism, on the viability of the mechanism, on the effectiveness of the mechanism, the safety of the helicopters depends. Therefore, since the helicopter was being used by the ONGC, was it properly examined? Was it really being examined? And who was examining it? And was the airworthiness certificate given by proper persons? Not only in this case, but how is it generally being done? It is not a question of maintenance. Maintenance is one thing. But giving a certificate of airworthiness before the flight takes place is another thing. In this case how was it given? Was it given? Fourthly, Sir, how many crashes had taken place during the last one year so far as the helicopters are concerned? And what is the make of the helicopters? Do they belong to the same category of Westland? Has the Government been able to find out concrete factors leading to the crash? And if

the Government has been able to find out the reasons, have they taken effective measures to eradicate the reasons? I ask this because, Sir, as the previous speaker pointed out, there have been a number of accidents, and these accidents do not result in the mere killing of persons. They also result in the killing of the goodwill of a country like ours. Therefore, that goodwill of the country, the good name of the country has to be restored. And I look upon our young Minister as a person who can restore it because this goodwill was a matter of casualty, but he is going to restore that.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I would like to seek some clarifications from the hon. Minister. Of course, whenever there is an accident from the air or in the air, it is always dramatic and is also tragic. But in the case of helicopters, our country has not been so lucky, and we had news of crash after crash. In this case, there seems to be some anomaly in what the statement indicates in the first part and the second part. It has been said by the hon. Minister that the pilots were very experienced, they had night ratings. The helicopter was also a tested helicopter. But it says the helicopter pilots did not attempt an emergency landing. If they have landed on water, it is always next to land. And in any case, a pilot who is in an emergency situation, would first try to find a location on land rather than on water since the impact is very slow on the water. It appears that there was not a major failure as far as the mechanical part of the aircraft was concerned. It is possible that there was a minor failure, and it may be just the setting up of the alternator. But what I would like to know from the hon. Minister is whether there is a theory of why the pilots did not try to land on land rather on water. This is question number one. Secondly, Sir, I am quite sure that all certificates of airworthiness requirements and so on are vey nicely carried out by the DGCA. I am directly in touch with the DGCA on many matters with regard to gliders, balloons, etc. And I know that they are fairly thorough. Now, in this case, if everything had been checked, then, Sir, does the Government suspect some kind of a sabotage? Was there something missing in the checking of what went on board as far as this declared aircraft was concerned so that they were forced to land on water and we had to lose five precious lives? There is also one more question the answer to which is not quite clear from the statement and, that is, why did it take actually five full days to find out the five bodies, to locate the five bodies and find them out. That does seem to me rather like a long time from the point of view of this particular accident. Whenever an aircraft falls on water or on ground, the villagers around very quickly come to know and usually render all help in the location of the damaged aircraft and it should not, to my mind, have taken that long for finding out the bodies.

Now, Sir, I come to the main question about helicopters. We are developing the LCA the light helicopter for doing various jobs and it is going to be a state of the art situation. (*Interruptions*). LCA is a mixture, it is basically an aircraft which will do many jobs. However, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is going to associate the original manufacturers of this aircraft with the inquiry to find out exactly what went wrong and whether the experience gained from this is going to be used in the manufacture of the LCAs which is going to be a very important item as far as the Government of India is concerned. Thank you very much.

श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलुवालिया (बिहार) : उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहूंगा, जैसा कि हमारे पूर्व वक्ताओं ने भी पूछा है, कि ऐसी कितनी दुर्घटनाएं हमारे मुल्क में इस हेलीकोप्टर से हो चुकी

[श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलूवालिया]

इसी के साथ-साथ मैं यह भी जानना चाहता हूं कि ऐसे हेलीकोप्टर कितने और हमारे मुल्क मे हैं, कौन-कौनसी संस्थाएं या किस-किस एअरपोर्ट पर यह रखे हुए हैं और किस-किस संस्थाओं के माध्यम से चलते है ?

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, चूंकि मैं पटनावासी हूं और पटना में रहते हुए मैंने देखा है कि सुबह सूरज उगने से पहले और सूरज डूबने के बाद ठण्ड के दिनों में बहुत ही धुंध हो जाती है और ऐसी हालत में रास्ते में कई बार गाड़ी चलाना भी मुश्किल हो जाता है । तो क्या जरूरत थी, क्या ऐसी अर्जेन्सी आ पड़ी थी ओ० एन०जी०सी० को, कि रात को 4 बजकर 24 मिनट पर कलकत्ता से यह फ्लाइट ली गई और जिसका पहुंचने का वक्त था 6 बजकर 40 मिनिट ? क्या ऐसे वक्त मे जब सूरज अस्त हो गया हो और फोग के कारण विजिबिल्टी पूअर हो, हेलीकोप्टर लेण्ड कर सकते हैं ? अगर नहीं कर सकते तो यह रिस्क क्यों लिया गया ? जब 6 बजकर 28 मिनिट पर एअर-ट्रेफिक कण्ट्रोल पटना से संपर्क किया गया, उस वक्त हेलीकाप्टर की ऊंचाई कितनी थी और विजिबिल्टी की डिग्री क्या थी ? मैं यह भी जानना चाहूंगा कि हेलीकोप्टर की लास्ट सर्विसिंग कब हुई थी और कितने घण्टे तक वह फ्लाई कर सकता था ?

उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, इन सारी चीजों के साथ-साथ जो यह इतने प्रशिक्षित पायलटस की जाने चली जा रही हैं और जिस पर आज भी गौर नहीं किया जा रहा है, उसके लिए मैं आपके माध्यम से और इस माननीय सदन के माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या इस पर कोई पार्लियामेण्टरी कमेटी बनाने पर सरकार द्वारा विचार किया, जो कि यह विचार करे कि भविष्य में पवनहंस के माध्यम से इन हेलीकोप्टरों को चलाया जाय या इनको रोका जाय ? धन्यवाद ।

श्री मीर्जा इर्शादबेग (गुजरात): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, जिस तरह से पवन हंस की दुर्घटनाएं हो रही हैं, ऐसा लगता है पवन हंस का पर्याय यम हंस हो गया है और इस कारण हमने इतने काबिल पायलट्स को इस दुर्घटना में गंवा दिया है । ...(व्यवधान)...मान्यवर, मेरे तीन प्रश्न हैं । पहले मैं यह जानकारी लेना चाहूंगा कि जैसे कि उन्होंने बताया हैलिकाप्टर क्षति से पता चलता है कि आल्टीमीटर्स सही ढंग से लगे हुए नहीं पाए गए । मैं यह जानकारी चाहूंगा कि जब ये बात हमारे सामने आई है कि ये सही नहीं पाए गए हैं तो उड़ान भरने से पूर्व मशीनरी वगैरा के लिए जो ओ०के० सर्टिफिकेट दिया जाता है, वह किसने दिया था ? उसमें इस क्षति के बारे मे कोई बात दर्ज की गयी थी या नहीं ? मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न यह है कि इस दुर्घटना के पश्चात् जितने भी हैलिकाप्टर आज सेवा में हैं, इन सभी हैलिकाप्टरों की क्या जांच करवाई गयी है कि ये अपनी उड़ानों के लिए सक्षम हैं या नहीं ? अगर इसकी जांच करवायी है तो कब करवायी गयी है और क्या नये सिरे से समग्र पवन हंस का जो जाल है उसे फिर से देखा जाएगा और उसके बारे मे कोई निर्णय लिया जाएगा । मैं मानता हूं कि यह हमारे चालकों की सुरक्षा के लिए और उसमें बैठने वालों की सुरक्षा के लिए यह अत्यंत आवश्यक है । तीसरे जो लोग उसमे मृत्युग्रस्त हुए हैं, उनकी जान की कीमत 5 लाख नहीं हो सकती । खैर फिर भी आपने उनको जो 5-5 लाख रुपए की राशि दी है, उस पर मैं आपको बधाई देता हूं । लेकिन मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा क्योंकि मेरी जानकारी के मुताबिक इससे पूर्व इतनी राशि शायद नहीं दी गयी है, तो किन नियमों के आधार पर या किस परंपरा के आधार पर इतनी राशि आबंटित की गयी है और क्या आइंदा भी अगर कुछ ऐसी दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण घटना घटती है तो यही पैरामीटर्स जो अभी आप इसमे रख रहे हैं, वह आने वाले दिनों मे भी रखे जाएंगे ? इस बात की जानकारी भी उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से चाहूंगा । धन्यवाद ।

PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I have only one question to ask. When we carefully look at it, the causes for this helicopter crash—it does indicate

one thing. Of course, I am not anticipating what will ultimately be the result that will come out of the investigation by the Inspector of Accidents appointed by the D.G.C.A.. or, the Committee of Inquiry. But nonetheless, what will be the position in case it is found that, basically, the fault lies with the helicopter itself? In this connection, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether, in the agreement that was entered into for the purhase of either the Dauphin helicopter VT-ELO, or even in the case of the Westland helicopter, which has also been meeting with accidents, there is a clause built into it in regard to penalty. If so, I would like to know whether this would be invoked in this case, in case it is found that there is a defect in the manufacture itself. Therefore, I would like to ask only this question from the hon. Minister whether, either in the case of the Dauphin helicopter, or, in the case of the Westland helicopter, which also, as I said, has been meeting with accidents,—in fact, I read in the newspapers that 29 Westland helicopters have been grounded—a penalty clause has been built into the agreement and, if so, whether the hon. Minister can give the details. I would also like to know whether this clause would be invoked in order to get compensation for whatever unhappy crashes that have taken place.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय (उत्तर प्रदेश): माननीय उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदय, 15 दिसम्बर को पटना हवाई अड्डे पर हैलीकाप्टर के उतरने का जो समय था 6.40, उसके ठीक 12 मिनट पूर्व उसका सम्पर्क समाप्त हो गया और बाद में पता लगा कि दुर्घटना हो गई ।

मेरे केवल दो प्रश्न हैं । एक तो यह है कि उसमें कुल 7 सवार थे और मंत्री जी के वक्तव्य मे स्पष्ट है कि ऐसी आशंका है कि हैलीकाप्टर में सवार सभी 7 व्यक्तियों की मृत्यु हो गई और 20 तारीख के पूर्वाह्न तक 5 व्यक्तियों के शवों को बरामद कर लिया गया था । तो मै यह जानना चाहता हूं कि जिन 2 व्यक्तियों के शव अभी तक बरामद नही किए गए हैं उनके नाम क्या-क्या हैं और वे कहां के रहने वाले हैं ? उनका पूर्ण विवरण क्या है ?

दूसरा मंत्री जी के उत्तर से यह स्पष्ट है कि यह जांच नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय, बिहार सरकार और पवनहंस लिमिटेड के अधिकारियों द्वारा हैलीकाप्टर के अवशेषों की जांच की जा रही है और प्रारम्भिक जांच से कुछ चीजें प्रकाश में आई हैं जिनका इसमें स्पष्टीकरण किया गया है । दूसरी जो जांच है---दुर्घटना के तुरन्त बाद नागर विमानन महानिदेशक ने दुर्घटना के कारणों की जांच करने के लिए एक दुर्घटना निरीक्षक की नियुक्ति कर दी है और तीसरे सरकार का निर्णय है कि दुर्घटना के कारणो की जांच करन के लिए एक जाच समिति के गठन करने का निर्णय लिया गया है । तो मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि अंतिम जो यह जांच समिति गठित करने का निर्णय लिया गया है, इस जांच समिति की टर्म्स आफ रिफरेंस अर्थात् इसकी जांच का विषय क्या है और साथ ही साथ जो जांच समिति आप बिठाने जा रहे हैं, यह क्या न्यायिक जांच होगी या केवल जो जांच समिति आप बिठाएंगे, यह विभागीय जांच होगी ?

मेरा सुझाव है कि अगर यह विभागीय जांच है तो चूंकि इस कार की दुर्घटनाए हो रही हैं और सुकोमल सेन ने सिटिंग जज का भी यहां पर जिक्र किया है, तो क्या मेरे सुझाव को मानकर सरकार इस संबंध मे किसी हाई कोर्ट के जज या सुप्रीम कोर्ट के जज से न्यायिक जांच कराने की कृपा करेगी ।

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: Sir, I was not very happy on the prospect of coming and making my first appearance in this House after the formation of the new Government, with a statement about this unfortunate incident which has taken lives of two of our very able and talented pilots

[Shri Arif Mohd. Khan]

and five other persons. But I must say that after listening to the views expressed by the hon. Members from both the sides I feel happy because they have expressed concern about the quality of the helicopters, about airworthiness, whether the authorities are adhering to the guidelines, to the safety measure and emphasis has been laid on prevention of such accidents in future. Sir, several questions have been raised. I do not whether I will be able to reply to every question individually, but I will try to cover all the questions which have been raised.

Shri Sukomal Sen and also Mr. Singh have said that I have not made any mention about the decision to ground all the Westland helicopters which were being operated by Pawan Hans. It is a fact that about two weeks back there had been a force-landing of a Westland helicopter near Juhu. After that ONGC had dechartered all the Westland helicopters which they were using for their purpose. The pilots who were operating those helicopters also expressed apprehensions about flying these helicopters. Due to multiple problems in operating Westland-30 helicopters, doubts have been expressed over its safety. Government have, therefore, constituted a Committee of Experts on 18th December to examine the various operational and safety aspects. I think, hon. Member, Shri Malaviyaji, has asked about the terms of reference. I would like to inform him that this Committee of Experts will examine the various operational and safety aspects of these helicopters. The Committee has been asked to submit its report by 28th February, 1990, pending which instructions have been issued to ground the entire fleet of Westland-30n helicopters. Sir, till the Committee submits its report and all those questions are examined in detail, these helicopters will remain grounded, they will not fly and as I have already mentioned, ONGC has already refused to hire these and the pilots have also expressed their apprehensions.

Now, Sir, the hon. Members wanted to know about the total number of accidents which these helicopters have met. Sir, Pawan Hans have had four fatal accidents so far—Westland-30 met with an accident on 14-7-88 at Vaishno Devi, resulting in the death of two pilots and five passengers; Dauphin-SA-365 on 12-8-88 at Pondicherry, resulting in the death of two pilots and eight passengers; Westland-30 on 7-2-89 at Kohima, resulting in the death of two pilots and one technician; Dauphin-SA-365 on 15-12-89 at Patna, resulting in the death of two pilots, two technicians and three passengers.

These are the total accidents after this Corporation was created, which had acquired Westland and Dauphin helicopters. Though the statement was about accident to Dauphin helicopter, it is but natural, because so much has been appearing in the press, that the members should feel concerned about the entire fleet which includes Westland helicopters also, particularly because recently we have taken a decision to ground all the Westland helicopters.

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: How are you going to meet the requirements?

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: I am coming to that. But before I come to that, hon. Members wanted to know the cause of the accident, as to whose fault it was. Sir, the purpose of ordering the enquiry is to identify the causes of the accident and surely after we get the report, necessary action will be taken so that we can prevent this kind of happenings in future.

SHRI M. M. JACOB (Kerala): Have you given a time limit for this enquiry?

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: Yes, they have been asked to submit the report by 28th February. Sir, since

other points have also been made by the Members, I would like to point out again that this Committee is going into only the operational and safety aspects. But in addition to that, several other points have been raised here in this discussion, particularly by Shri Kapil Verma, Shri Singh and Shri Malaviyaji. They have asked me to examine the whole question. Sir, from the records which I have seen, it is very difficult for me to arrive at any conclusion at this stage, but from the records of the Ministry it is clear that from the day Government had decided to acquire some helicopters for the use of the oil sector and for VIP movement also, from the very first day when Westland helicopter's name was included in the list of the helicopters which were being shortlisted, at every stage the proposal was opposed. Several shortcomings were found by the Technical Evaluation Committee, particularly by the officials of the Defence Ministry. But then, at some later stage a sudden decision was taken and the subject of acquisition of helicopters was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Civil Aviation. From the records it is very clear that despite the name having been included in the list, with various other manufacturers of helicopters, there was a lot of resistance. But, in July 1985 the subject of acquisition of helicopters was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Even after that, a technical team consisting of representatives of the DGCA, Indian Air Force and Indian Airlines carried out flight tests of Westland helicopters on 12th September 1985, and the conclusions reached were that Westland helicopters were considered well within the limits to perform whatever parameters were fixed. Then a second team of experts consisting of representatives of DGGA, Indian Airlines and Indian Air Force again carried out flight tests and hen they cleared the helicopter on rounds of payload penalty.

Another question has been raised by Prof. Lakshmana. It is not only a question of manufacturing defects. Even otherwise, with regard to other obligations like supply of spare parts, the manufacturers have not adhered to the obligations and they have not fulfilled the obligations which were in the contract, which were part of the contract. But the question which Prof. Lakshmanna asked was whether the contract contains any penalty provision which can be invoked if the manufacturers had not fulfilled their obligations. I am very sorry to inform honourable Members that possibly this is one of the few contracts where the penalty provision does not find a place in it. We do not have any weight, we cannot force the manufacturers to carry out the obligations, which they must, in order to fulfil the contract.

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH (Uttar Pradesh): This was a gift.

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: This is not correct, Sir. This was not a gift. Definitely there was some grant from Britain and that money was used. In fact, it is also very interesting that every time manufacturing or technical shortcomings were pointed out, instead of removing those shortcomings or defects, the other side kept increasing the m onetary benefits, saying, well, if this is the loss which you are going to suffer, then we will give you some more money. So, the technical shortcomings were being, sort of, compensated by giving more money under the grant, or, I do not know if any other arrangement also existed.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: What about the Dauphin helicopter? Was the same method arrangement also adopted for that also?

SHRI MOHD. ARIF KHAN: No, Dauphin is different... (*Interruptions*) I am sorry. I am not in a position to reply to the question about Dornier. I will need fresh notice for that.

7.00 P.M.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Dauphin is Dornier.

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: When I say "Dornier," I mean the aircraft. I am talking about the helicopters because the subject pertains to the Pawan Hans Corporation, and they are responsible for operating only helicopters.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Dauphin is the helicopter, and it is manufactured by Dornier.

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: O. K. Some hon. Members raised the question about the Dornier aircraft which are operated by Vayudoot. In that context, I have said that I am not in a position at the moment to reply to those questons.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: In this case do you suspect any sabotage? That is one question. Another is whether you will associate the manufacturers with the enquiry.

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: Sir, this is exactly what I have pointed out. It will be very premature for me to start giving expression to my suspicion or anybody else's suspicion. We have constituted a Committee which will examine the whole matter in detail, and then they will come to certain conclusions. As soon as the conclusions come, I will share those conclusions with the hon. Members of this House.

There is a lot of criticism. Within such a short period, whereas the normal life of a helicopter is much longer, the Government of India has been forced to ground all these helicopters. So, this matter acquires importance. This becomes quite important. Again, Sir, I enquired from the officials of the Civil Aviation Ministry. Even in the country where the Westland helicopters were manufactured, they are not in use. They do not use them. We are the only country where the Westland helicopters were purchased. And, Sir, within a short period of time we have been forced to ground all these helicopters. There has been a lot of critism. Apprehensions have been expressed by hon. Members and outside also by the general public. There have been many accidents which have taken the lives of some of our very able pilots. Hon. Members here in the House have also asked for total enquiry. So, Sir, with your permission, I would like to announce that we will definitely go into this question. We will examine this whole question in detail. This matter definitely requires a detailed examination. We would like to carry out examination of the following aspects:

Purchase of the Westland helicopters and re-examination of the selection parameters technical and maintenance aspects, based on which the Evaluation Committee recommended for the purchase of the helicopters.

The present state of maintenance and operational capability of Pawan Hans along with the analysis of the history of failures, accidents and snags reported so far.

The present status of the airworthiness and safety factor of this helicopter keeping in view the final decision whether it would be safe to keep them in operation.

Sir, I assure you that it would not be a routine departmental enquiry. We would like to go to the botton of this matter.

DR. RATNAKAR PANDEY: What about a judicial enquiry? Some Members mentoned about a judicial enquiry.

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: Sir, we will examine this question. We would like this enquiry to be conducted by experts of Civil Aviation, and if necessary, then, some judicial offi-

cers may also be involved with that enquiry.

As soon as we get the report of the enquiry, I would again like to come to the House and apprise the hon. House about the measures which we would take, the action which we would take on that enquiry. Sir, the hon. Member, Shri Gurudas Das Gupta is asking and other Members have also asked why the helicopter was flying at night. This helicopter was cleared by D.G.C.A. for night flying...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: But, what was the purpose?

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: .... and this was a weekly affairs. Well this is not for us to determine, this is for the ONGC, because ONGC had hired this helicopter for their use and whenever they wanted to do this....

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: I asked you a pertinent question. What was the visibility?

SHRI ARIF MOHD. KHAN: I think I have that information with me. Even if I do not have that information, I will supply it to the hon. Member. But, Sir, the helicopter was being operated in accordance with the rules. The necessary clearance and permission was with the crew. There was no violation of any air safety measures or rules of the airport Thank you.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY): Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal will continue tomorrow on the President's Address.

The House now stands adjourned and will meet tomorrow, the 27th December, 1989 at 11 a.m.

The House then adjourned at eight minutes past seven of the clock till eleven of the clock on Wednesday, the 27th December, 1989.